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# Enhancing the Experience: A Multiple Case Study of Students' Experiences Using Arts-Based Techniques in Learning Qualitative Research

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## Enhancing the Experience: A Multiple Case Study of Students' Experiences Using Arts-Based Techniques in Learning Qualitative Research

### Abstract

This paper represents the third in a series of reports published in TQR in which authors explore students' experiences learning to conduct qualitative research. Prior researchers have suggested that emotional and experiential elements of the learning experience are key for students learning to conduct qualitative research; the use of arts-based approaches may help address these priorities. We gave students in a conflict analysis and resolution degree program opportunities to conduct qualitative research using either an arts-based or traditional approach to analysis. We identified several ways that arts enhanced the learning experience for students, and discuss considerations for instructors or others who would like to incorporate an arts-based element into research instruction.

### Keywords

Qualitative Research, Arts, Learning Experience

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## **Enhancing the Experience: A Multiple Case Study of Students' Experiences Using Arts- Based Techniques in Learning Qualitative Research**

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### **Introduction**

Students' involvement in learning qualitative research has been found to include affective, cognitive, and experiential dimensions (Cooper, Chenail, & Fleming, 2012). Students have reported experiencing a range of emotions as they learn qualitative research (Cooper, Fleisher, & Cotton, 2012), including frustration and stress, especially if prior research instruction has primarily or exclusively focused on quantitative methods (Hein, 2004).

While authors or educators have made recommendations about how to teach qualitative inquiry, there is presently no consensus view of the best practices for qualitative instruction (Drisko, 2008; Eisenhart & Jurow, 2011). However, based upon a meta-data-analysis of 25 primary research reports of qualitative research students' learning experiences, Cooper, Chenail, and Fleming (2012) developed a grounded theory suggesting that "students' learning experiences will be enhanced through the implementation of an inductive approach to qualitative research education that incorporates experiential learning early in the learning experience" (p. 1).

One promising variation within experiential research instruction is incorporation of arts-based or arts-informed research. Similarities between arts and qualitative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Pigrum & Stables, 2005) suggest that incorporation of arts into qualitative research instruction may both improve students' understanding and enhance their use of qualitative inquiry. Therefore, use of arts-informed research instruction provides a potential way to address the affective and experiential dimensions of the learning experience.

The purpose of this paper is to describe a research project that was implemented to examine students' responses to incorporation of arts-based data analysis tools into a qualitative research course included in a conflict analysis and resolution degree program. Although the students themselves conducted research, the focus of this project is not on their findings but instead is on students' experiences as new researchers, and how incorporation of arts-based researcher bracketing and data analysis techniques might have impacted those experiences.

Student participants in this research study used two distinct arts approaches: collage and found data poetry. Use of these two arts provided the researchers with both a visual art form and an expressive art form that can be experienced either visually or aurally.

### **Context of Researchers**

This study is the third in a series of studies on qualitative research students' learning experience conducted within the context of Nova Southeastern University's School of Humanities and Social Sciences (NSU-SHSS). The first two studies included a meta-data-analysis using constructivist grounded theory techniques and a study using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis conducted by two instructors and several students in the School's Qualitative Research Graduate Program (QRGP). The second author, Robin, participated in both of these studies. This third study was conceived and designed by Robin and first author, Sheryl, who is a student in the QRGP. Kelly and Elizabeth are doctoral students at NSU-SHSS and served as Research Assistants on the project, taking an active part in the data analysis and reporting of findings.

### **Overview of Study**

An unidentified conference reviewer provided incentive for this project when the reviewer asked of one author (Robin) to what extent research findings supported her assertion that use of arts-based techniques facilitated teaching and learning qualitative research methods. Although many authors have published articles (e.g., Clover, 2006; de la Croix, Rose, Wildig, & Willson, 2011; Kedell, 2011) that advocated use of arts in various educational settings, the results of our investigation into the reviewer's question suggested a need for more research to assess the efficacy of arts in research instruction.

The first goal of this research project was to consider the value of arts in qualitative research instruction. Despite the several advocates for arts-informed research cited above, there is an identified need for research to explore the effectiveness of this approach to teaching and learning (Russell & Zembylas, 2007). Another goal was to assess the contribution of arts-based activities to students' experiences in conducting and analyzing research. Despite the many proponents arguing for the merits of arts activities in enhancing interpretation and accessibility of research, these methods may not yet be widely accepted in traditional academic settings. A third goal was to explore how use of arts-based activities might impact how students view themselves as researchers. Students participating in research instruction are thrust into a dual-identity setting quickly as they balance learning research with being a researcher; this is complicated in this instance by requesting that students take on the additional role of artist. Our final goal was to contribute to the scholarly work and ongoing discussion directed toward improving qualitative research instruction for students. Although the students we recruited were enrolled in a conflict analysis and resolution program, we hope that the results of this project will be of interest to those who teach or are studying research methods in various academic programs.

Our focus for this research was the quality of student experiences rather than educational outcomes such as grades. It is reasonable to assume, however, that improvements in students' learning experiences will lead to improvements in achievement, whether these improvements are demonstrated through higher course grades or dissemination of more thoughtful research. We were also interested in investigating how the experiences of students who used traditional analysis methods might compare with those who incorporated arts. Given our focus, the specific research questions we set out to address were: How do students describe their experience with qualitative research instruction that does/does not incorporate

arts-based techniques? How do students who do/do not use an arts-informed approach describe their experiences conducting qualitative research? How do students conducting qualitative research using/not using an arts-informed approach describe their role as a researcher?

## **Teaching and Learning Qualitative Research**

Cooper, Fleischer, and Cotton (2012) observed that “research on qualitative research students’ learning experiences can be grouped into three general categories:

- a) students’ experience learning qualitative research within a particular academic field (e.g., Shaw, Dyson, & Peek, 2008),
- b) the impact of using a specific technique or tool on learning qualitative research (e.g., Raddon, Raby, & Sharpe, 2009), and
- c) students’ experience learning a particular qualitative methodology (e.g., Harper, O’Connor, Self, & Stevens, 2008)” (p. 1).

The literature on students’ experience of learning qualitative research includes a number of reports of studies that focused on students within a specific academic field. These fields include a number of health care related fields, including health studies, medicine, and public health (e.g., Stark & Watson, 1999; Von Unger, Werwick, Lichte, & Hermann, 2010; Wright, 2007). There have been studies conducted among students in education (e.g., Roulston, deMarrais, & Lewis, 2003), students of psychology (e.g., Mitchell, Friesen, Friesen, & Rose, 2007; Shaw, Dyson, & Peek, 2008), and students in the field of marriage and family therapy (e.g., Pratt & Dolbin-MacNab, 2003), among others. Within the social sciences, there have been a number of studies conducted among sociology students (e.g., Brandao, 2009; Keen, 1996; Schell, Ferguson, Hamoline, Shea, & Thomas-Maclean, 2009) and social work graduate students (e.g., Holley, Risley-Curtiss, Stott, Jackson, & Nelson, 2007). However, to date we have not found research focused on the learning experience of qualitative research students in the field of conflict analysis and resolution or peace studies, though one such student was included among a sample of graduate students from diverse fields in a study conducted by Cooper, Fleischer, and Cotton (2012). The study described in this paper contributes to the literature by exploring the learning experience of students in this emerging interdisciplinary social science field.

## **Use of Arts in Research Instruction**

Despite many advocates for arts-informed research, there is a “lack of strong empirical research to support the belief that arts-integrated curricula are actually effective in terms of student achievement” (Russell & Zembylas, 2007, p. 290). There are, however, multiple examples of published research articles by authors who described and encouraged creative uses of arts in research instruction.

According to Raingruber (2009), poetry is appropriately used in research instruction because thoughtful examination of poetry by students encourages empathy, interpretive thinking, attention to detail, and collaborative approaches to meaning making, which are all valuable skills for qualitative researchers-in-training. Bresler (2009), on the other hand, drew a parallel between music and research education, noting that both required “learning to perceive, listen and improvise” (p. 8). Barrett (2007) also explored the intersection between music and research by incorporating a videotaped recording of a choral rehearsal into data analysis instruction in a graduate music education course. LeBlanc (1998), and Tan and Ko

(2004) reported use of popular film to teach observation skills for students learning ethnographic or social research methods, and Saldaña (2009) has used popular film in a graduate qualitative research seminar to “help clarify concepts that could not be grasped from reading a textbook” (p. 259), including variations in research approaches, methods, and data analysis.

Walsh, Chang, Schmidt and Yoepp (2005) had two goals when incorporating arts-based stress management activities into nursing course curricula. The first was to help students manage academic anxiety; the second was to engage students through the process in order to provide exposure to the fundamentals of research design. Unlike the other cited research, Walsh et al. used quantitative assessment tools.

In a few instances, students learned research concepts through the process of creation rather than appreciation. Franz (2007) introduced an arts-informed research project as an assignment in a graduate design program to help students “develop sound appreciation of and skills in using art-informed inquiry to explore issues of relevance” (p. 27). Henderson et al. (2008) described use of ethnographic autobiography, a narrative art form, in graduate qualitative research instruction. Boardman et al. (2002) created a multi author “nontraditional polylogue” (p. 80) that presented students’ experiences in learning and conducting qualitative doctoral research. Boardman et al. initially presented the performance as a conference presentation and later published the details to help provide a starting place for instructors to “explore the issues impinging on field research with novice researchers” (p. 80).

Our research described here adds to these examples by incorporating the use of collage and found data poetry into qualitative research instruction, and adds to the smaller segment of the literature that chronicles the use of student-created artistic expressions.

## **Methods**

### **Design**

The research design we used was a qualitative case study design. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), a qualitative approach may “create and bring psychological and emotional unity to an interpretive experience” (p. 5). Additionally, given that the goals of this project are to assess or evaluate the utility of arts-based techniques in research instruction, Patton (2002) noted that use of qualitative methods in evaluation help “illuminate the processes and outcomes...for those who must make decisions” (p.10).

The case study, according to Yin (2009), is an appropriate design when the phenomenon of interest is current, as opposed to historical, and examined in context, unlike experimental research, which, according to Yin “deliberately divorces a phenomenon from its context” (p. 18). One of the recommendations made by Cooper, Chenail, and Fleming (2012) was that instructors of qualitative research classes consider more sophisticated designs than the class-as-single-case design that predominates much qualitative instruction research. Therefore, we expanded on the single case study design by assessing two groups or cases in the study—one group of students who chose to use arts-based techniques, and another group of students who chose to employ traditional qualitative techniques; thus, this research design can be considered a multiple-case study.

### **Participants**

The university Institutional Review Board approved the research study prior to recruitment. Participants were students in an introductory online graduate qualitative research course within a doctoral program in conflict analysis and resolution. Students were provided

with the choice of incorporating arts-based techniques in research projects they conducted for the class or use of traditional analysis methods. Students were recruited for the research after they made their decisions, and, to the relief of the research team, participants from both the arts and traditional groups volunteered, facilitating comparison of the experiences of the two groups. To avoid any sense of coercion, the instructor for the course (Robin) was not involved in describing the study or recruiting participants. The first author, Sheryl, who is not associated with the graduate program in question and was hence unknown to the students, was Principle Investigator and handled all recruiting and consenting processes. Robin remained unaware of who had participated in the study until the conclusion of the course.

Due to the nature of the program, which includes students from around the world, and the nature of the course, which was delivered in an online format, participants in the study included adults living in the Northeast, Midwest, Mid-Atlantic and Southern regions of the United States, as well as countries in South Asia and the Caribbean. All participants were English-speaking adults, as well as doctoral students.

## **Data Collection**

A characteristic of case study research as described by Yin (2009) is use of multiple types of data. We were able to take advantage of working within an academic course setting and gather a range of data including student assignments, student online discussion posts, student comments during virtual class meetings, and transcribed audio recordings of two focus group debriefing interviews the first author conducted after the course was over. Assignments of particular interest included a description of the student researchers' identification of "past knowledge or nonpresented presuppositions" (Giorgi, 2009, p. 91) also referred to as bracketing. Students in the arts-based group created a bracketing collage while students in the traditional group wrote a bracketing statement. Students in both groups conducted an interview and followed a qualitative coding and analysis process; as an additional part of the analysis, students in the arts-based group created a data poem from the text of the interview transcription. Examples of student collages and found data poems can be viewed at <http://enhancingtheexperience.weebly.com/>

Data types included text, audio files, video files, presentation software, and visual collage files, stored digitally. We assigned a code number to all student participants and used these in lieu of names. We used no information from or references to students in the course who were not research participants.

## **Data Analysis**

The data were divided among the four researchers and were coded using descriptive, in vivo, and emotion coding methods (Saldaña, 2013). Through the process of sharing our analysis files, we collaboratively developed categories from the codes and further refined our data into themes. We also created a comparison or "word table" (Yin, 2009, p. 156) to view a "cross-case synthesis" (Yin, p. 160) that allowed us to see how participants in the arts-based and traditional groups responded to each of the research questions.

## **Quality Control**

The majority of studies on qualitative research students' learning experience have been conducted by the students' instructors, though this has rarely been acknowledged as a limitation of the research (Cooper, Fleischer, & Cotton, 2012). In some cases, the research has relied heavily on instructor-led focus groups of students' experience in a course

(Brandao, 2009; Holley, 2007; Von Unger, 2010). We felt that instructor involvement in recruitment or data collection would compromise the quality of the data collected, and hence Robin was not engaged in these activities.

Throughout the data analysis process, all four researchers participated in both individual data analysis as well as regular conference calls to share ideas and insights, reflect on questions raised, and provide a means of peer debriefing and group analysis. We found this combination of individual and group analysis to strengthen the depth of analysis and to serve as a means of enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings, which are described below.

## Results

As noted above, the three research questions guiding this study centered around the three major concepts of the experience of learning about qualitative research, the experience of conducting qualitative research, and the understandings of the role of a qualitative researcher. The subject matter of students' research projects was an individually selected issue related to identity-based conflict. Most students chose a topic that was related to their professional experiences, their research interest, or, in some instances, both.

In this section, we present the findings of our study organized by these three major aspects, beginning first with findings pertaining to the experience of learning qualitative research. These findings are discussed in terms of key themes that we identified through our analysis.

### Experience of Learning Qualitative Research

Our first research question was: How do students describe their experience with qualitative research instruction that does/does not incorporate arts-based techniques? Through our analysis, we identified the following theme: *Use of arts-based techniques enhanced the experience of learning how to conduct qualitative research*. Students from both the arts-based and traditional groups found learning the qualitative research paradigm to be intriguing, challenging, and stimulating. Students from both groups appreciated experiential learning and came to see the value of qualitative inquiry in addressing issues related to identity-based or other dimensions of conflict analysis and resolution. Through comparative analysis, however, we found evidence that students in the group that used arts-based techniques found that the use of arts enhanced their learning experience as novice qualitative researchers. In fact, all of the study participants in the arts-based group found it to be a positive experience. As learners, they described the use of arts as "exciting" and "fun" and noted that using arts-based techniques allowed them to be "adventurous" as they learned about qualitative research, and offered a rare opportunity as graduate students to express themselves "outside the lines" in what is otherwise quite a structured and formal learning experience.

In addition to enhancing the emotional aspects of their learning experience, students in the arts-based group indicated that they found the use of collage and poetry enhanced their learning experience by deepening their understanding of qualitative research. For example, one participant indicated that the use of collage enhanced her process of learning the skills associated with qualitative research. Another member of this group wondered aloud in the focus group whether she could even learn how to do qualitative research without arts-based techniques because they helped her understand the purpose and procedures associated with this research paradigm.



## Experience of Conducting Qualitative Research

While the first theme pertained to the experience of learning qualitative research, a second theme identified through our analysis addressed our findings regarding the experience of conducting qualitative research. The second research question guiding the study was: How do students who do/do not use an arts-informed approach describe their experiences conducting qualitative research? As with the findings related to learning qualitative research, we noted that students in both groups described their experiences conducting qualitative research in some similar ways. For example, these novice qualitative researchers found it both challenging and enlightening to effectively conduct a qualitative interview, found the process of transcribing an interview both tedious and helpful to the overall analysis process, and also found coding somewhat intimidating but resulting in new discoveries. Beyond these similarities, however, our comparative analysis led us to develop the following theme: *Use of arts-based techniques enhanced qualitative data analysis*. Study participants who used arts-based techniques felt more confident in their research findings, because they felt that the arts-based techniques had provided depth and credibility to their analysis. For example, two participants in this group used the concept of validity when discussing these techniques, noting in one case that the arts-based techniques “validated my themes” and in another case that these techniques “definitely helped me validate what I put into the analysis.” Others noted in more general terms that the arts-based techniques caused them to think more deeply about their data and led them to deeper insights in their analysis process.

Speaking specifically of the use of collage as part of the bracketing process prior to conducting data analysis, participants described how the use of collage enhanced their ability to conduct researcher bracketing. One participant in this group noted that the collage enabled her to express emotions that could not be put into words and to identify feelings she didn’t know she had. The collage provided an opportunity to show a graphic that demonstrated her knowledge of the research subject, one of the purposes of the bracketing process. Another observed “the bracketing statement would not...have been as successful if I didn’t have the arts-based collage behind it.” This enhanced reflexivity contributed to avoiding researcher biases in the analysis process.

Participants also reported that the incorporation of found data poetry also contributed to the quality of their analysis. Participants identified the following benefits of the composing a found data poem as part of their thematic analysis: it helped them understand the perspective of the interviewee, it helped them capture the essence of the interviewee’s experience, it confirmed the value of research on the topic, it helped the researcher feel “more connected” to the interviewee and understand their experience more deeply. One participant observed that he had struggled with the development of themes and interpretation of the data until he created his found data poem. “The poem took me by surprise,” he stated, and gave him insight into the understandings of the interviewee. Participants in this group also noted that composing the found data poem was easier than expected and that they were surprised by the results because it provided an “expanded” ability to present ideas. One participant exclaimed in the focus group interview, “For me, the poem was so powerful!”

## Experience of Learning the Role of the Qualitative Researcher

The third and fourth themes developed through our analysis related to our third research question: How do students conducting qualitative research using/not using an arts-informed approach describe their role as a researcher? Students from both groups found the experiential process of conducting an interview and then subsequently completing first cycle coding provided them with the opportunity to become more aware of the unique role of the

qualitative researcher. Both groups acknowledged the difficulty of being both a member of a group and a researcher engaged in a study of the same group. In addition, participants in both the arts-based and traditional groups found that, upon reflecting on their qualitative research experience, they were able to identify their own personal biases related to their chosen research topic and to become more “transparent” about their biases.

However, our comparative analysis yielded additional data that led us to the development of our third theme: *Arts-based techniques enriched the students’ awareness of the need for reflexivity in the role of the researcher*. Students who used the arts-based techniques felt they were able to visualize their role as a researcher. One participant shared that she had reflexively developed a visual of her role as a researcher as “providing a blank canvas for participants to paint the stories of their lives.” Another commented that the found data poem exercise was “energizing and exciting” and that using the arts-based approach provided her with a “greater appreciation for the process” and the importance of the role of the researcher. A third member of the arts-based group found that the collage bracketing exercise helped him to reflect upon and “see his role” in research.

The fourth theme we developed also centered on student’s experiences of learning how to fulfill the role of a qualitative researcher but focused on how students came to understand the role of researcher, specifically in relationship to research participants. Based on the data, the theme we identified is: *The experience of learning qualitative research led students to realize that the role of researcher calls for self-awareness about the impact on research participants*. Students who participated in the group that utilized the traditional approach to learning qualitative research indicated that they discovered that qualitative researchers have a responsibility to balance ethics and curiosity, remain sympathetic and strive not to harm or victimize participants—particularly when the focus of the research is a sensitive subject. Students in the arts-based group also reported learning that researchers were in a position of power in relationship to participants, though many indicated what seemed to be a positive and affirming role that researchers play. One participant said, “Researchers empower individuals.” Another noted that using the arts-based approach specifically was helpful in expressing ideas related to researching topics with participants related to human rights and conflict. To that end, this participant said that the “role of the researcher is an agent of positive change, making the world a better place.”

A review of the data indicates that what emerged as an important part of students’ learning process was that they understand qualitative research to be inherently participant-focused and, because people and their experiences are at the heart of qualitative research, it is critical for researchers to consider the effects of a research study on the participants themselves. One focus group participant mentioned that she learned the importance of “being really careful about re-traumatizing people.” Several others mentioned a belief that researchers need to ensure that the research does not “harm”; stating that the “researcher must consider risk of harm to participants” and that the researcher “must consider harm not only to participants but to groups or populations.” Lastly, some participants indicated the process of learning about ethics in qualitative research was important not only for understanding the overall responsibilities of a researcher but also for clarifying, enlightening and transforming their understanding of the role a researcher has when interacting with participants who may be victims of abuse or wrongdoing. This was captured in the reflection of one participant who believed that unethical or non-reflective researchers can cause harm. She said, “Researchers can perpetrate injustice in some instances.”

## Discussion

We believe that the results of this research reinforce and build on the findings from the prior articles in this series (Cooper, Chenail, & Fleming, 2012; Cooper, Fleischer, & Cotton, 2012). The information we offer in this section has its roots both in our analysis and the raw data; the latter include students' observations that were not necessarily incorporated in the themes presented above.

The experience of learning qualitative research has been found to include affective, cognitive, and experiential dimensions (Cooper, Chenail, & Fleming, 2012). The findings of this case study suggest that arts-based techniques have the potential to enhance all three dimensions of the qualitative research student's learning experience. Previous research has shown that students feel anxiety when learning how to conduct qualitative data analysis (Li & Searle, 2007; Raddon, 2009; Richards, 2011). One benefit of including collage and other artistic approaches within the analysis process may be that it will alleviate some of the stress associated with the desire to "do it [qualitative research] right". An individual's artistic expression does not need to conform to a pre-determined format, but rather, art is expected to be varied and unique. This general attitude about art may help students feel a measure of confidence and control in the midst of the confusion and uncertainty that can be associated with learning a new research paradigm (Brandao, 2009; Harper, 2008; Hunt et al., 2009). In addition, the findings above indicate that the cognitive and experiential aspects of the learning experience may be enriched through the incorporation of arts-based techniques. Participants indicated that their analysis and reflexivity were deepened as a result of the use of collage and poetry. Overall, the experience of learning qualitative research seemed to be richer and more meaningful to those students who included arts-based techniques.

In addition to the various dimensions found to be part of the learning experience of qualitative students, it has been found that *building connections* plays an important role in having a meaningful and successful learning experience (Cooper, Fleischer, & Cotton, 2012). The findings of this study suggest that the inclusion of arts-based techniques in the learning process may support the students in building connections—to their research topic, to their participants, and to qualitative research itself. Participants indicated that the experience of creating a bracketing collage made them aware of feelings related to their topic that had not recognized previously, and participants noted that it was through the construction of the found data poem that they really gained insight into their interviewee's experience. In these examples, participants were building connections that enriched the research experience and quality of analysis through these arts-based methods.

## Implications

Consistent with the findings reported by Cooper, Chenail, and Fleming (2012) and Cooper, Fleischer, and Cotton (2012), students in general expressed stress or insecurity when approaching qualitative data analysis. Students identified additional apprehensions about use of arts-based approaches including lack of confidence, concern over learning multiple new things at once, and perceived increase in analysis time when arts-based rather than traditional methods were used. We believe these concerns related to use of arts might be minimized by thoughtful instructors. In fact, student participants in our research provided some guidelines for instructors by identifying what they felt were more successful instructional tactics, including the provision of clear and careful direction, presentation of multiple examples, and creation of a safe, non-judgmental, even nurturing environment for experimentation. Creation of a nurturing environment would be particularly critical in a course in which use of arts-based or arts-informed approaches to research tasks is required rather than optional.

One additional result worth noting is that responses to collage were mixed, ranging from disinterest to enthusiasm, while the students all responded in a positive way to the use of found data poetry. Whether this has to do with students' frequent early educational exposure to collage construction, not always under optimal conditions (e.g., too few magazines, dull scissors, ineffective glue or paste, time pressure) or other factors, the suggestion we take away from students' response is that poetry rather than collage might represent a better activity to use in introducing arts-based approaches. Because the collage was used as a bracketing exercise while the found data poem comprised part of interview analysis, the order was reversed in this instance.

Cooper, Chenail, and Fleming (2012) and Cooper, Fleischer, and Cotton (2012) emphasized the role of experiential learning. It is clear from our engagement with these data that all of the student researchers began to undergo some change in focus once they began their own data collection and analysis. For this particular course, students were responsible to conduct a single interview, and it may be that the experience of getting close to a research participant helped student participants stop focusing on their own fears and begin instead focusing on responsibilities toward their research participants. Apprehensions expressed at this point in the process seemed to center more on the researcher's responsibility to, as one student expressed "look at what was important for the interviewee." For their research topic, students in this conflict analysis and resolution course were asked to choose subject matter related to an identity-based conflict of personal interest. Their connection to the topic might have further encouraged the students' focus away from personal insecurities and toward the research. This suggests to us that experiential aspects might be successfully, and helpfully introduced very early into a course. For instance, students might be requested to engage in simple, 1 or 2-question practice interviews with fellow students as early as the second or third class meeting.

We want to recognize that students representing both groups in this research considered whether an arts-based approach represented authentic academic research. This suggests that discussion of this issue should be included in any curriculum that incorporates an arts-based element, and instructors need to acknowledge that this question may be posed to students by other students, instructors, or reviewers. In the end, students and other researchers will need to make and defend their own decisions regarding approach to research design and analysis, but it is important they be prepared and encouraged to make thoughtful decisions.

We believe that the multiple case study design was enlightening and should be considered for further research. In order to combine this design with a requirement that all students participate in some type of arts-based analysis, we recommend that researchers or course instructors consider using a 'delayed intervention' design, in which some students use arts-based approaches initially while others use traditional approaches, and at a point midway through the term, the requirements are reversed. Even within this approach, which might be considered a quasi-experimental research design, we continue to advocate for data collection primarily through qualitative methods, and also recommend use of multiple data sources. We believe that we could not have captured the depth and detail of our findings absent use of both qualitative analysis and multiple data sources. However, use of a delayed intervention research design would allow all student participants to have a basis for comparison of their experiences using both arts and traditional analysis methods.

One consideration that came up frequently during our researcher discussions was how much of a role that students' personalities or orientation played in their decision whether to use arts-based or traditional analysis methods. In truth, we cannot be certain how much any differences in students' learning experiences resulted from their choices of different approaches versus pre-existing differences. However, fully 'controlling' for an individual's

personality or prior experiences is difficult, if not impossible, even when using statistical models such as analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). We would instead recommend that students be given an opportunity to express their reactions to use of arts prior, during, and after experiences, in a safe way such as through a research journal turned in to the instructor at the end of a course. In combination, this type of journal requirement and data collected throughout the delayed intervention design recommended above could potentially provide researchers with very rich and detailed insight from students who are able to compare learning experiences with arts-based and traditional approaches.

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